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# *The Gates of Utterance*



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# The Gates of Utterance and Other Poems

BY  
GLADYS CROMWELL



BOSTON  
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY  
1915

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TO  
ANNE DUNN



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THE GATES OF UTTERANCE  
AND OTHER POEMS





## THE GATES OF UTTERANCE

THERE is a throng within the gates,  
A pressing, diverse throng;  
Without, a peaceful throng awaits,  
To which I would belong.

Within the gates the varied folk  
Advise discordantly;  
Without, the poet-crowds convoke  
To council harmony.

Within the gates are all the heights  
And depths of serried powers;  
But when a lyric theme invites,  
I reach out-lying bowers

Where dwell the bards of quiet years;  
I join my song to theirs;  
My glad, unfettered spirit hears  
The melody it shares.

## THE RIDERS

You look askance at me.  
Do you take my horse  
For Pegasus? Of course  
He steps like Poetry,  
But he's a quiet beast.  
I think I hear you say  
You don't like in the least  
His fleet-footed way.

But your light flitting mare  
Skims the meadows too.  
Her nimble feet pursue  
The stony dales, dare  
The sloping pastures, leap  
The brooks. You do the things  
I do in dreams, asleep —  
(Pegasus has wings)!

You canter wide-awake.  
Your mare is real; my steed  
Imaginary. Need  
You then suspect me? Take  
The cloud-rack by my side!  
Partners, Life and Art,  
Adventurers, we ride  
To rhythms in heaven's heart.

## COMPENSATION

You never told me, never, yet I know  
You hold a sadness in disguise, unseen  
Behind the days and years that intervene  
Since you renounced ambition long ago.  
Whence comes the tender love that you bestow  
To feed our loves? Behind your self serene  
There burns a golden passion,— how you screen  
With radiant life the flame you must forego!  
Then you assume our love is ample meed,  
Atonement,— oh! I wonder any deed  
Of ours can ease your spirit's lassitude,  
Or lift your lonely heart! Our stars elude  
Your sun that made them bright — your solitude.  
Deprived, no boon avails to fill your need.

## REALITY

WHAT things are real?

    This falling, falling rain,  
This garden where  
    My flowers droop again?

Or simply dreams,

    Dreams asleep in me  
Until I join  
    Their silent company?

## THE BAT

OVER the river of sorrow  
Spread thy drab wings wide.  
Cool is the river. Glide  
Between the trees. Borrow  
The prudent feet of the fleeing  
Beast. Thy pinions blend  
With leaves. O thou All-Seeing,  
Be night's obedient friend!

To a gloomy bat, all sorrow  
Is cool and sombre and sweet.  
So no wonder thou fearest to meet  
The feline light of to-morrow.  
When out from the east a glimmer  
Of twilight corals thy wings,  
Thy vision grows dimmer and dimmer,  
Thou dreamer of dusky things!

When morning comes out from the east,  
Advancing with stealthy ray,  
Thy wheeling wings betray  
Thy presence, Bird-and-Beast,  
Soaring to dismal bowers  
With smoke-like motion. Gladness,  
Flame-like, heaps through the hours  
Thine ashen sorrow and sadness.

Blinded by noon-day splendour,  
Unseeing till darkness return,  
Thy cinereous pinions yearn  
For stone-colored night. Surrender  
Thy spirit. Is not the sighing  
Monotony sweet? Maybe  
Creation is what we call dying,  
As daylight is darkness to thee.

## THE AUDIENCE

INTENTLY leans the avid sage  
We name The Audience. His mood  
Invites a vigorous prelude  
Of sound, the silence to assuage,—

The silence in sequestered sources  
Of his being. (Albeit his mind  
And soul and heart may be like wind-  
Awakened rivers in their courses.)

In clear, attenuated line,  
The violin a theme avers.  
It is this theme as it recurs  
That forms the plenary design,—

This theme, which the composer's love  
Could never deal with twice the same;  
Submissive cellos now proclaim  
It; louder clarions above

Now give it wise embellishment.  
In unsuspected ways, all strings  
And pipes resume it, altering  
Their rhythms to be more eloquent.

The strange, concurrent harmonies  
Provoke The Audience to pleasure,  
Lead by phrase and clustered measure  
To the peace of cadences.

The Audience thinks in terms of tone ;  
The curious intellect pursues  
The flowing lines and shadowy hues  
Of sound, akin to sculptured stone ;

Mind estimates. But in between  
The mind and soul an interim  
Is brimmed with intonations dim :  
The soul itself is left serene.

Who can express what music is  
To soul? A cloud becomes cascade  
And stirs a river winter-weighted  
With frost. The massive images

Of mountains, on whose purple ground  
The falling water carves a line  
Of white, as narrow and as fine  
As winter floods when first unbound,

Remind one of the soul when sound  
Traverses it. Music is spring  
To soul, April's awakening,  
A freedom and a peace profound.

But what is music to the heart?  
A trouble, a vicissitude,  
A dream no cadence will conclude.  
In it the surging sounds of Art



Stay ever unresolved. They are  
Beginning only, origin,  
Inchoate symphony within  
A symphony of sky and star.

There is no answer, thus and thus,  
That present players can impart  
To the long-listening, searching heart;  
But answers multitudinous.

The avid sage, The Audience,  
Is wrapped in his own silence dim.  
The mind, the soul, the heart in him  
Observe the circling consonance

Of chords. These grow more intricate  
Each time they are resumed, and still  
One chosen theme the tones fulfill,  
One motion they delineate.

So God reveals Himself to me.  
I am His audience; I hear  
With mind and soul and heart, His clear,  
Progressive theme perpetually.

## TO FRANCE

OH, still I dream of thee, my France! The sun  
Irradiates thy meadows. Stalks of grain  
And aureate beams infusing them are one.  
There is a harmony that links thy plain  
To quiet skies; that weaves a slender chain  
Of living vine with wavering light. Where cease  
Thy level spaces, hills dim clouds detain;  
And in thy south, where seasons find increase,  
The sheaves, like kneeling women, praise thy  
peace.

Unwilling and reluctant are my dreams,  
To recognize transforming destinies.  
I dream of thee, my France; of mellow beams  
That ripen happiness; of ample skies  
That frame thy far perspectives. Meadows rise  
To them by poplar spans. Upon thy ways  
I see the cross. The gentle Saviour dies  
With arms athwart the cloud. As heavenly  
rays  
Touch earth, His love a sense of light conveys.

Is happiness no more than a disguise,  
A sheathing dream reality must wear?  
If so, away with joyful mockeries!  
My France, in desolation thou art fair.  
Thy trampled poppies and thy fields laid bare  
Express a beauty that prosperity

Concealed. Thy joys are fallen; fate would  
spare

No ornament of peace. But I can see  
The strange unfolding of thy destiny.

I love thee, and would know thee as indeed  
Thou art. No scythe, a sword embraces wheat.  
The poplars on thy margin seem to heed  
No more the wind that made their stems throb  
sweet

As lyre strings. The stars alone entreat.  
Thy vine is severed and thy grape is blood;  
Thy sheaves are souls. Thy rising meadows  
meet

The sky like surging waves of a dark flood,  
And shadow closes every quickening bud.

My France, my France, in darkness I begin  
To know the light that only faith can shed  
Upon thy ways. As joy and beauty win  
Through death, so thou shalt win. Art thou  
not fed,

Though fields are bare, with spiritual bread?  
The star-strewn shadow crowns and dignifies  
Thy young, submissive God of the bowed head.  
How newly does thy sorrow harmonize  
With His, whose loving arms enfold the skies!

## APPROACH

APPARELLED in a mask of joy till now,  
I knew thee not. Asleep, I see thy face  
More simply. Sorrow's leisure lets me trace  
The nicer lines. Thy sealèd lids, thy brow,  
Thy lasting posture, purposes avow ;  
In thy spent form resides a moveless grace.  
A pageant was thy life, and in its place  
I find a truth to feed and to endow  
My heart. Thy wonted mask of joy belied  
The meaning death's bare attitude makes clear.  
From living gesture thought went often wide,  
And I was poor interpreter ; but here,  
Where it would seem our thoughts anew divide,  
The steady silence draws thy spirit near.

## DEFINITION

As clouds lie in the west,  
My fairest pleasures rest  
In you, their element  
Of being. Loath to die,  
They ornament your sky,  
Amassed, magnificent.

They shun the realms beyond.  
Are you not their fond,  
Fair dwelling by consent  
Of time? Why should they go  
And vanish quite, as though  
They were not all-content?

My pleasures are not love,  
Else like the clouds above  
They swiftly would relent.  
They are mild beauty; dim,  
Resistless thought; and whim,  
And idle blandishment.

Love is a wilful power,  
More like the wind or shower  
In which the cloud is spent.  
My pleasures only screen  
The space of light serene  
In your deep firmament.

## EMBLEMS

WHERE sweet ferns blow, where hemlock shadows lie,  
Where peaks of pine o'er oak-twined branches reach,  
In groves where bend the poplar and the beech,  
Where emerald willows touch the emerald sky,  
They come to us, the Lost Ones. Far and high  
The winds among the trees lift muffled speech,  
And tell the hidden past; we question each  
Entreating form those winds identify.  
Below the hill they huddle stone by stone,  
The lost ones and the loved ones we have known,  
Who followed, fearless, ways where beauty led;  
But here upon the hilltop, winds intone  
The foregone past. Oh, let us think instead,  
The living trees are emblems of our dead.

## THE POET'S THRIFT

My landscape only need comprise low hills,  
For these are eminent and limitless  
To me. They mean more than my dreams ex-  
press ;

They mean more than my word or deed fulfils.  
The slender trees, the tuneless whip-poor-wills,  
Impart quite ample themes to loneliness.

I find enough in scant elusiveness  
Of springs and little brooks. My spirit thrills  
To beauty, unprepared for the sublime.

I wonder, though, when I shall be completed  
Even to transcribe these hills? Sometime  
This landscape in few lines will show to me  
The subtle mysteries I have entreated,  
In the simple realm of poetry.

## SOLICITUDE

To me, your transport is a dim surmise,  
A vague, imagined bliss. But I will brace  
Myself to life; though languid for the chase,  
Will gird my grief. Where your swift pleasure  
flies —

Beneath whatever mirth-alluring skies —  
I'll follow, lest you pause in darkling space.  
Oh, let me gather stars, and turn your face  
To these, lest, meeting night, you breathe faint  
sighs!

Is joy illusion? This, in sooth, is clear,—  
The pause of weariness; and should I hear  
You drop a single sombre semi-tone  
From Paradise, I'd gather every star;  
For I divine what it must be to mar  
This wonder that my breast has never known.



## ASPIRATION

THOUGH my frail soul should never touch again  
The semblance of reality like this ;  
Through periods of time should always miss  
The imprint of true life ; nor find the plain,  
Familiar mould of being ; still not vain  
Are those desires that frame undying bliss.  
The sky is not a vanishing abyss  
To me, but steadfast beauty, sheathing pain.  
I live in confidence. As planets turn  
About the sun, continually I yearn  
To God. His interpenetrating fire  
Is all I need. Though heaven prove mockery,  
My life ascends by dint of sheer desire,  
Imbued with hopes of immortality.

## JOY

How shall I make of joy discovery?  
For is it not an orbit that enspheres  
The heart? Like misty heaven, as one nears,  
The circuit spreads; and like the flowing sea  
Whose waves evolve a scroll of mystery,  
Its vague development eludes the seers.  
It is a garment like the shrouding years,—  
A dusky shield, a cloudy canopy,  
Illumined by the soul that stands beneath.  
It must forever amplify, deploy,  
Give spirit space,—that's all I know of joy.  
It is a hovering defense, a sheath,  
In which the spirit comes to flowering,  
A folding and a cool enfolded wing.

## EDUCATION

I HAD lived many years when first I met  
What men call Sorrow. I had long conceived  
A semblance of it, thought I had achieved  
That magnitude, when side by side I set  
My lonely days. I knew the alphabet  
Of Life's experience, and I believed  
That when I touched another's grief, I  
grieved; —

But when at last I was myself beset,  
I marveled. Little had I known. They told  
Me and they showed me death, but finally,  
Like shifting clouds no foresight can explain,  
I felt the changeful years envelop me.  
I was not loath to meet at last with pain,  
But oh! to feel the youth my age could hold!

## EVIDENCE

IF there is any one device to show  
Me God, by which His aim is apprehended,  
Is it not forgiveness? You extended  
Zones of lovelier truth a while ago,  
My friend, when you considered me as though  
I had not been unfaithful, nor offended  
The deep love in which our lives are blended.

Yes, by your acquittal I forego  
Mistrust. Your pardon is the pledge of powers  
By which we rise to new degrees of being.  
Now I read the crucifix that sealed  
The years. Your loving-kindness has revealed  
The symbol. The significance is ours.  
We take the step from symbol on to seeing.

## PROGRESSION

THE resonance of wind and wave  
Is put to music by the tide;  
So passion modulates to verse,  
And moves in rhythm's quiet stride.

The bards in realms enchanted hold  
Familiar converse, like the birds;  
Repeat emotion, improvise,  
Sustain the fundamental words,—

Until, forsaking pastorals,  
They must pursue Life's ampler prose,—  
A continuity of song  
The heart's experience only knows.

## INTUITION

RHYTHMS of exultation flow  
In dusky regions far behind  
The formal meadows of the mind.  
Sighs waft syllables, as blow  
The winds the grasses to and fro.

The shape of cloud, as thought effaces  
Dream, eclipses the moon's lustre.  
My winged stars, like swallows, cluster  
In the deep enchanted spaces  
That imagination traces.

## KINDRED

WHAT inequality!  
The apple trees and stones  
Are kindred. Love, the stormy æons  
Have made my spirit bleak and grey.

Like sun-emblazoned leaves  
Or blossoms in the spring,  
Your loveliness, o'ershadowing,  
A garland for my spirit weaves.

## RESIGNATION

THE dark house yonder is my life ;  
It looms against the purple night ;  
The windows are my stars ; I count  
Them all,— each window one delight.

Oh ! there are many stars above,  
But mine in strong substantial woe  
Are framed ; I cannot misconstrue  
Life's dark intent, joy's fitful glow.



## SOLACE OF SEASONS

COLD winter finds no word of condolence.  
I laid my grief where pastures bright in spring  
Bore panacea, with young life whispering;  
I laid my grief in summer by the side  
Of a deep sea that brought a healing tide;  
When autumn came, I laid it in a cloud;  
The strong wind bore it in that balmy shroud:  
Cold winter finds no word of condolence.

When skies above are bleak, I will not care;  
A flame I'll kindle for my chill despair,  
A flame within my heart, for condolence.

## THE FOUNTAIN

My garden fountain sings to-night,  
    Its margin is all moist with spray,—  
That snow-white marble margin where  
    A white rose dreams of drooping day.

Upon the rose fall rhythmic drops,  
    Snow-cool from the pale fountain's crest,—  
Drops cooler than the shadows when  
    The sun leads day-spring to the west.

Unto the rose, my fountain's rim  
    Is ample joy, while I, through tears,  
Can see my garden growing dim,  
    And dream of sorrow's girding spheres.

## THE THRESHOLD

I THREADED endless aisles  
Of level trees, of spare,  
Undeviating wood;  
I penetrated streets  
Of houses parallel;  
I crossed a common where  
My day paused sentinel;  
At evenfall I stood  
Before the dim defiles  
Of dusk, where light retreats,  
Immured in sombre ward.  
The sheathèd sun went down;  
Opaque was heaven's frown;  
Mountains, looming grey,  
Framed the threshold — yea —  
The portal to the Lord.

## THE HERMIT

I MARK the hermit's den,  
And ponder why he fled  
So far from other men;  
Why chose to make his bed  
In lonely Nature's fen.

For surely he must tread  
On yearnings even there;  
And he must see — outspread —  
The vital branches bear  
The burden of Christ dead.

## INTERPRETATION

My flesh aspired to soul's vitality.  
In mortal life's imperfect span  
I read the stately spirit's plan,  
Like scroll of cloud in heaven's immensity.

Deciphering, it seemed a baneful tryst,—  
The flesh with radiant soul conferred  
Until the purport of the Word  
Was manifest.— The Word was even Christ.

## VICTORY

WHAT are the friends of Jesus thinking,  
As they see  
Him crucified against the sky's  
Blue mystery?

And Jesus, what can He be thinking  
On the cross?  
He looks upon the shadow throng  
Whom passions toss.

They know a fervent exultation,  
Like day-spring  
Above their sorrow, and the promise  
Of their King.

But Jesus, what can He be thinking?  
Crown of thorns,  
The memory of strife, His sovereign  
Soul adorns.

## THE HYPOCRITE'S REWARD

WHEN came his final judgment,  
God gave him for his prize  
The crown, the single sceptre,  
He'd worn as his disguise.

The crown, the single sceptre,  
A new, familiar shame;  
For when he came to judgment,  
He wore them in God's name.

## TESTIMONY OF HANDS

Is every day the judgment day?  
A thousand mortals lift on high  
A throng of hands that plead and pray;  
Beneath a space of quiet sky,  
Their several gestures testify.

Oh, mark the wistful hand that holds  
A sorrow in its upturned palm;  
The gentle hand that firmly folds  
Across the breast to make it calm.  
Oh, mark the hand by which the balm

Of youth was scattered, eloquent  
As the grey leaf upon the tree  
When summer's mellow joy is spent.  
Above that throng of hands, oh, see  
The Hand that plies eternity.



## THE ASCETIC'S VINDICATION

How strange are we! — From pale St. Francis  
down,

Our solemn joy, our pain,  
Commanding, notable; our hearts, anon  
Like flames no walls contain,  
Anon like wings that search oblivion.

We make of time a pleading orison;  
We pierce earth's dim domain;  
We glance with eager eyes from faces wan;  
We strive; we press; we gain;  
We count not squandered strength. When life  
is done,

Men shall affirm through us the Saviour shone.

We crave adventure; we attain,  
Defying death, immortal benison.

“How strange you are, how vain!”  
Phlegmatic minds assert in unison.

## TRANSMISSION

A **SHELL** expressed the verity  
In tones more limpid than the sea,—  
Distilled the sea's infinity.

A mellow leaf disclosed the true  
In more than sun's pellucid hue,  
The sun was tinged in passing through.

A wing revealed the sky unseen,  
Till motion made the air serene,—  
A wing — a soaring life, I mean.

## PREPARATION

A TIME will come when I shall breathe  
New melodies to soothe and fold,  
Like portions of a mellow sheath,  
My sorrow. While my songs withhold  
Their tones, I pause before the years ;  
I gaze on the gray world ; I strive  
To clear the mist of doubting tears.  
— My songs, what music you'll derive  
From silence in the time to come !

## EGYPT

How still is Egypt, as a corpse's breast;  
Her power is muffled, stone on stone;  
The sinews of her kingdom lie at rest;  
Her deserts wake no pulse's moan.

The Nile is like an adamantine sea;  
Sky's cloud and star, like soundless flame;  
The moon in silence mourns eternity,  
And calls blind man with magic claim.

The hushed, impenetrable fear, the peace  
Of wings, the palm's inwoven spray,  
Are like death's pause before the soul's release  
Into another golden day!

## DUSK

As flowers at dusk their choicest perfumes hold,  
Some hearts hoard beauty when the body's old:  
I see an age-bent woman lead the herd  
To pasture, with no need of guiding word.

While the dull beasts in the tall grasses browse,  
Inside her soul the earth's enchantments drowse;  
The needles pause between her wasted hands,  
For light is always mellow where she stands.

No motion marks her life's harmonious dream;  
It is a part of Nature's quiet theme.  
Each day renews the uneventful past,  
Although her spirit nears a change at last.

• From the grey threshold of her silent home  
One night, her spirit, kin to evening's shade,  
Will float away from crevices life made,  
Like seaweed from a cliff into white foam.

## CONFLICT

DIVIDED by the dark,  
Our foils converge. A spark  
You kindled not, My Enemy,  
A spark I never drew  
From bitter fires that sear me through  
and through,  
Gleams fitfully.

That spark, that little light,  
Is lit where foils unite.  
It lives in spite of us, My Foe;  
In intervening space,  
This little eye that darts from place  
to place  
Sees clear, I know.

Opinions are not one,  
And man's criterion  
Is not in us. Between, above,  
The cross that weapons frame,  
My Adversary, gleams a truth whose  
name  
Might still be Love.

## TO THE CROWD

WHEN I hold a budding pleasure  
In my heart, can I diffuse it?  
No; you want the musk full-measure,  
Not the bud,— so you refuse it.

When I hold an ebbing sorrow,  
Can I share the balm with you?  
No; you want no lessening morrow,  
But meridian's deepest hue.

Blossom of my joy completest,  
Zenith of my sorrow's hour,  
Yours. So I may keep the sweetest:  
Buds and lees — ambrosial power.

## AUTUMN

CAPRICIOUS little poem and sapling rhyme  
Grew on the golden hillside of my youth.  
The stanzas were as crooked and uncouth  
As early things are wont to be. For time  
Was pressing and mid-summer's glowing prime  
Was ever imminent. Mysterious truth  
Was the warm soil thought sprouted from.

Forsooth

My songs were stem and filament to climb.  
But now, the memory of bud and fruit  
And flower is weariness. This present week  
In mid-September, wayward wild pursuit  
Is over; youth fulfilled. How shall they seek  
Beyond, unless from sunbeams in the skies  
These listless leaves take warmer harmonies?













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